



# NEW PROJECT UPDATES

Flaming Gorge and Vernal Ranger Districts—Ashley National Forest

November 2019

## Greetings

This newsletter is intended to give a brief overview of new projects coming up on the district, what actions we propose, and what results we would like to see on the ground. Your comments are welcome about **these projects** during this initial scoping period. The [schedule of proposed actions](#) has a complete list of projects on the Ashley National Forest.

## Highline ATV Trail Reroute

The Highline Trail 025 is a popular route that provides access to high elevation areas along the spine of the Uinta Mountains. The Eastern section of the Highline Trail accommodates motor vehicles less than 50 inches, as well as horses, hikers, and bikers. Due to the combination of steep grades and erosion, the trail tread is cut up to 3 feet below the surrounding ground level, resulting in ongoing impacts to resources. The proposal is to reconstruct the trail to provide an improved user experience and mitigate impacts to soil, vegetation, and water resources. The proposed project is on the Vernal Ranger District of Ashley National Forest and is within Uintah and Daggett counties. The trail reconstruction begins approximately 0.35 miles from the Highway 191 trailhead and ends 2.2 miles away at the intersection with North East Park Forest Road 212.



Section of Highline Trail showing resource damage.

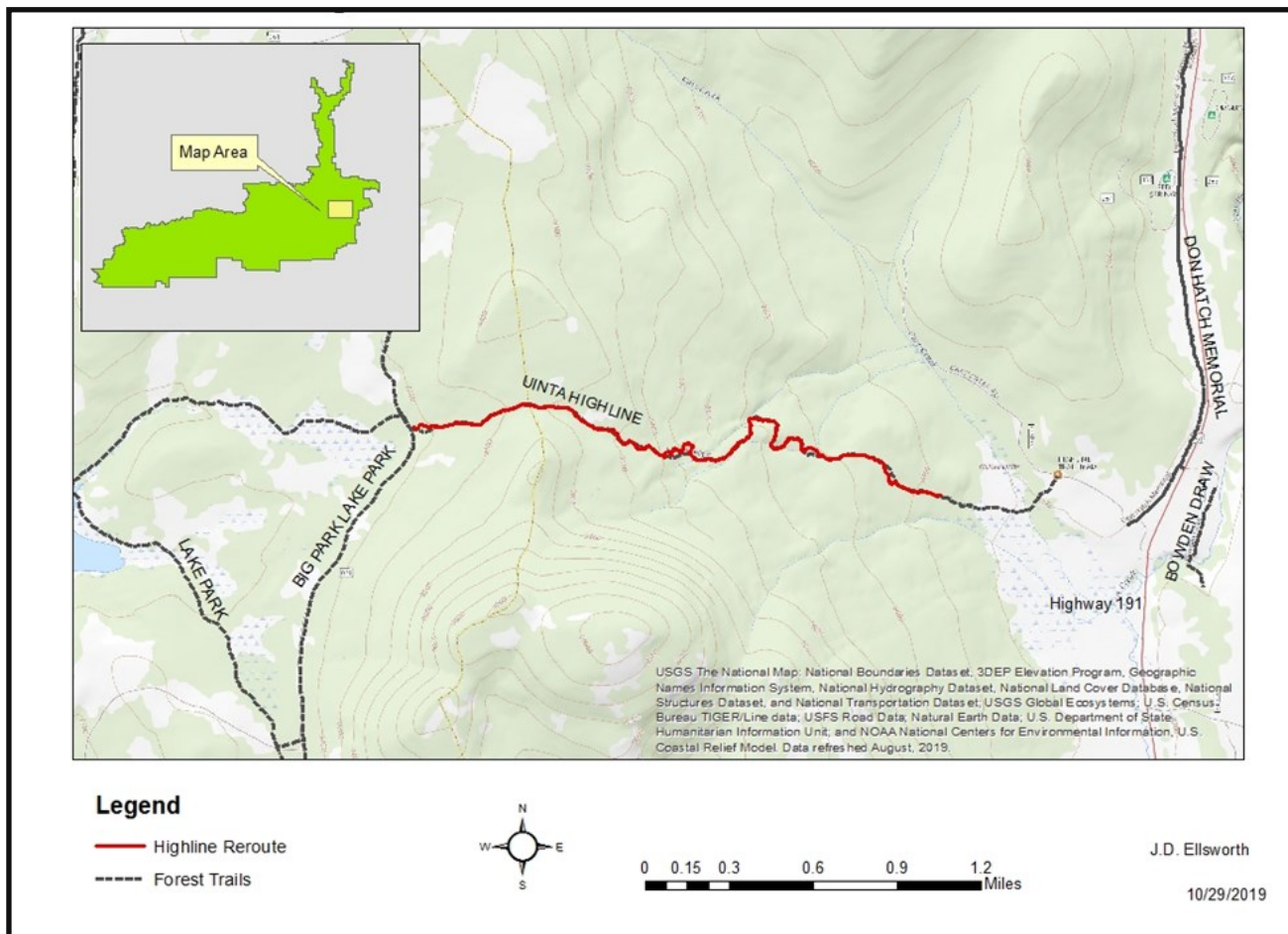
## About the Ashley National Forest

The Ashley National Forest is located in northeastern Utah and Wyoming.

The Forest encompasses 1,384,132 National Forest acres (1,287,909 in Utah and 96,223 in Wyoming). Of the total acres, 276,175 are High Uintas Wilderness. Elevations on the Ashley National Forest range from 6,000 feet to over 13,500 feet. Highlights of the Forest include Kings Peak, Flaming Gorge Reservoir and National Recreation Area, the Flaming Gorge Scenic Byway, and Green River Corridor.

## In This Issue

- Highline ATV Trail Reroute
- Big Brush Creek-Outlaw ATV Trail Reroute
- Round Park Hardened Stream Crossings
- Dutch John Mountain ATV Connector Trail
- D1 West Northwest Wildlife Habitat Improvement Project
- Buckboard Marina Improvements Special Use Permit



**Location of the proposed reroute.**

**Proposal:** The proposed project will be implemented by the Vernal Recreation Staff. The segment of trail to be reconstructed is approximately 2.2 miles in length and includes trailhead improvements. The reconstruction work would stay within 50 feet of the existing trail route for the majority of its length, rerouting up to 0.25 miles away from the trail corridor to construct switchbacks around steep sections. Work would be accomplished through a combination of hand tools, heavy machinery, and blasting. Best practices for OHV trail construction would be utilized such as drainages, grade reversals, switchbacks, and hardened surfaces, in order to minimize future resource degradation. When construction is finished, the old trail path would be restored to a naturalized condition. The trailhead will be improved by installing a new kiosk and applying road base to the current parking area. This proposed action may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EIS or EA under category 36 CFR 220.6 (e) (1) Construction and reconstruction of trails. For additional information on this project, contact Joseph D. Ellsworth, Recreation Technician, at 435 – 781-5179 or at [joseph.ellsworth@usda.gov](mailto:joseph.ellsworth@usda.gov)

## Big Brush Creek—Outlaw ATV Trail Reroute

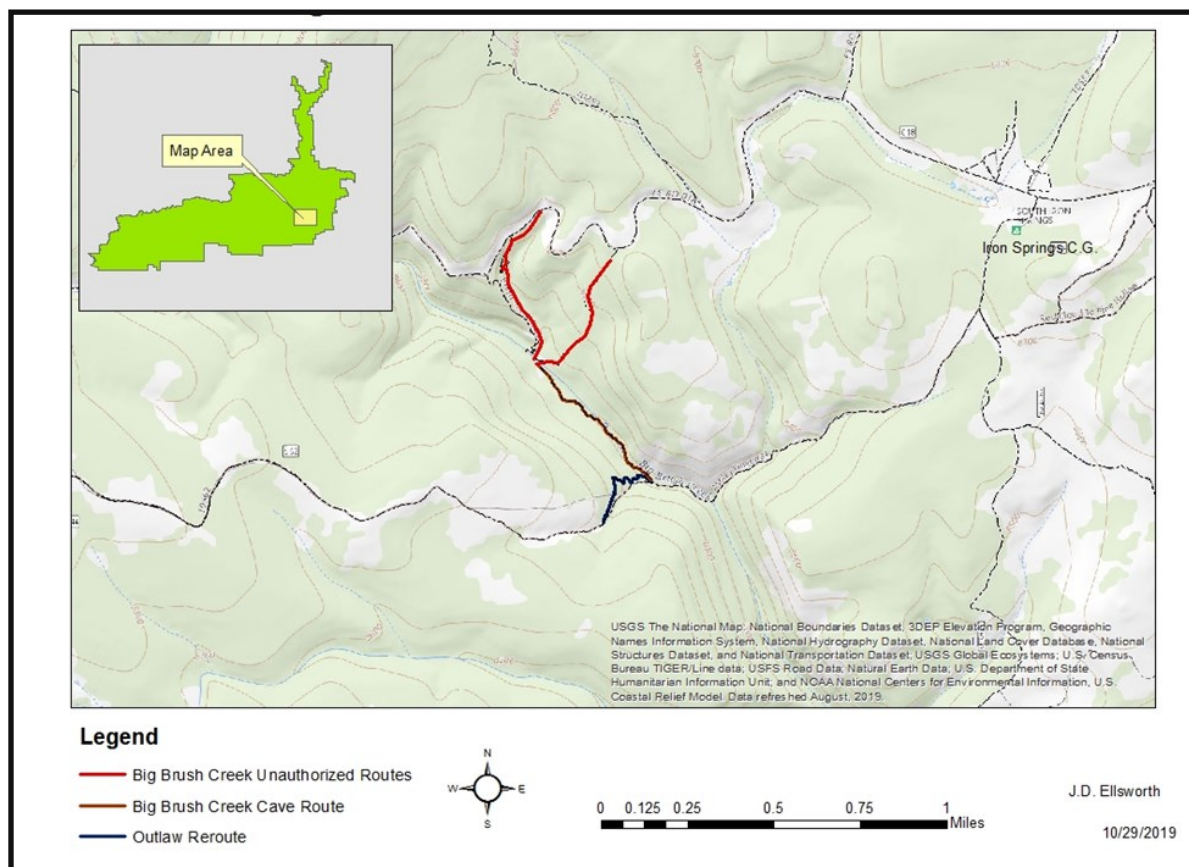
The Outlaw ATV Trail is a popular section of motorized trail that provides access to a variety of scenery in the interior of the Vernal Ranger District. The trail accommodates motor vehicles less than 50 inches, as well as horses, hikers, and bikers. The section of trail between Iron Springs Campground and Taylor Mountain Forest Road 044 is very steep and eroded, which is hazardous to users. Additionally, a network of unauthorized routes between Red Cloud Loop and Big Brush Creek cave are causing ongoing impacts to resources.





Section of Outlaw Trail showing damaged trail and resource problems.

The proposed project is on the Vernal Ranger District of Ashley National Forest and is within Uintah County. The general location is between Iron Springs Campground and Taylor Mountain Forest Road 044.



Location of the proposed reroute.

**Proposal:** The proposed project will be implemented by the Vernal Recreation Staff. The project proposal would reroute the trail to provide an improved visitor experience and mitigate impacts to soil, vegetation, and water resources. The segment of trail to be rerouted is approximately 0.35 miles in length, with the reroute extending slightly longer to accommodate switchbacks. In addition, the Forest Service would also construct a 50" or less OHV trail from the existing trail to a turnaround point near Big Bruch Creek Cave. Work will be accomplished through a combination of hand tools, heavy machinery, and blasting. Best practices for OHV trail construction will be utilized such as drainages, grade reversals, switchbacks, and hardened surfaces, in order to minimize future resource degradation. When construction is finished on the new trail segment, the old trail segment will be closed and re-naturalized. Access to the unauthorized trails will be closed with barriers and restored to a naturalized condition. This proposed action may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EIS or EA under categories 36 CFR 220.6 (e) (1) "Construction and reconstruction of trails", and 36 CFR 220.6 (e) (20) "Activities that restore, rehabilitate, or stabilize lands occupied by roads and trails, excluding National Forest System roads and National Forest System trails to a more natural condition." For additional information on this project, contact Joseph D. Ellsworth, Recreation Technician, at 435 – 781-5179 or at joseph.ellsworth@usda.gov.

## Round Park Hardened Stream Crossings

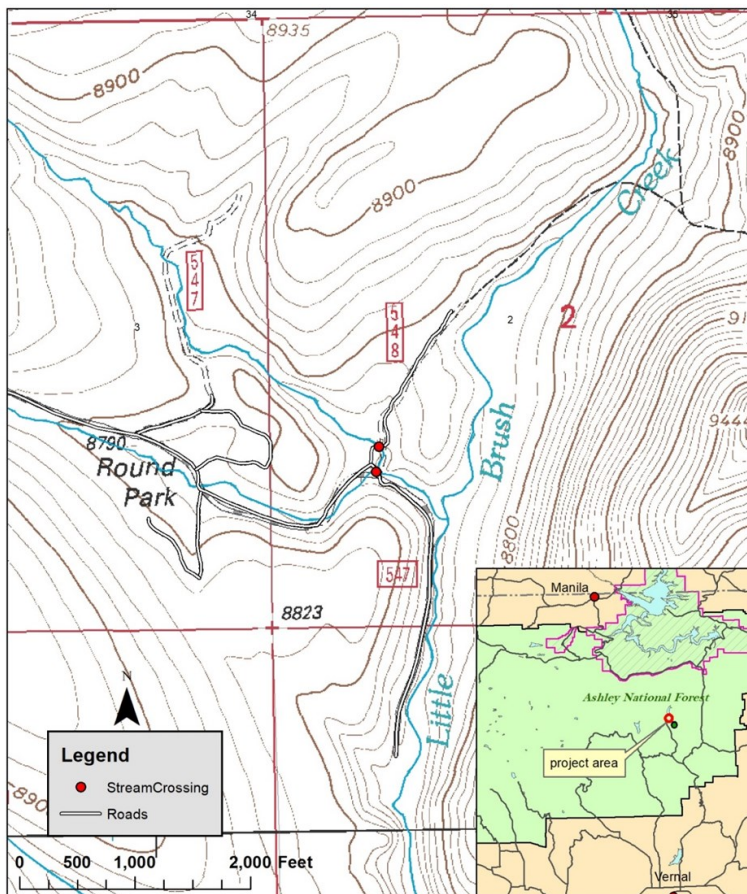
Round Park is a popular recreational area, receiving a variety of use to include camping, motorized use, and non-motorized use. There are two stream crossings located on Dyer Creek and a tributary to Dyer Creek in close proximity to one another. These stream crossings need to be improved in order to stop the degradation of fish habitat in the vicinity of the crossings. The current stream crossings are low water fords consisting of native rock held in place by a plastic geo-grid material. Overtime the plastic has degraded or torn and is no longer properly functioning. As a consequence, the crossings are contributing sediment to the streams, creating problems for fish habitat and water quality. Crossings would be upgraded to a more stable hardened crossing using modern and engineered construction practices. The proposed project is on the Vernal Ranger District of Ashley National Forest and is within Dagget County. The general location is Round Park off of Forest Service Road 020. The crossings are located about ¾ of a mile off Forest Service Road 020 and are located on Forest Service Road 547 and Forest Service Road 047. The legal description is T1S R21E Sec 2.

**Proposal:** The proposed project decision will be implemented by Hydrology and Engineering staff. The remaining plastic geo-grid will be removed and replaced with hardened style low water fords. The new fords will be constructed of prefabricated articulating concrete block (ACB). The pre-cast concrete blocks are cabled into pre-assembled mats and lifted into place once on site. This proposed action may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EIS or EA as directed under FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30, Section 32.2, Category 7: Modification or Maintenance of stream or lake habitat structures using native materials or normal practices. 36 CFR 220.6 ( e ) ( 7 ). For additional information on this project, contact Kevin Faucher, Hydrologist, at 435-781-5189 or at kevin.faucher@usda.gov.





Illustration of deteriorating plastic on one of the stream crossings in Round Park.



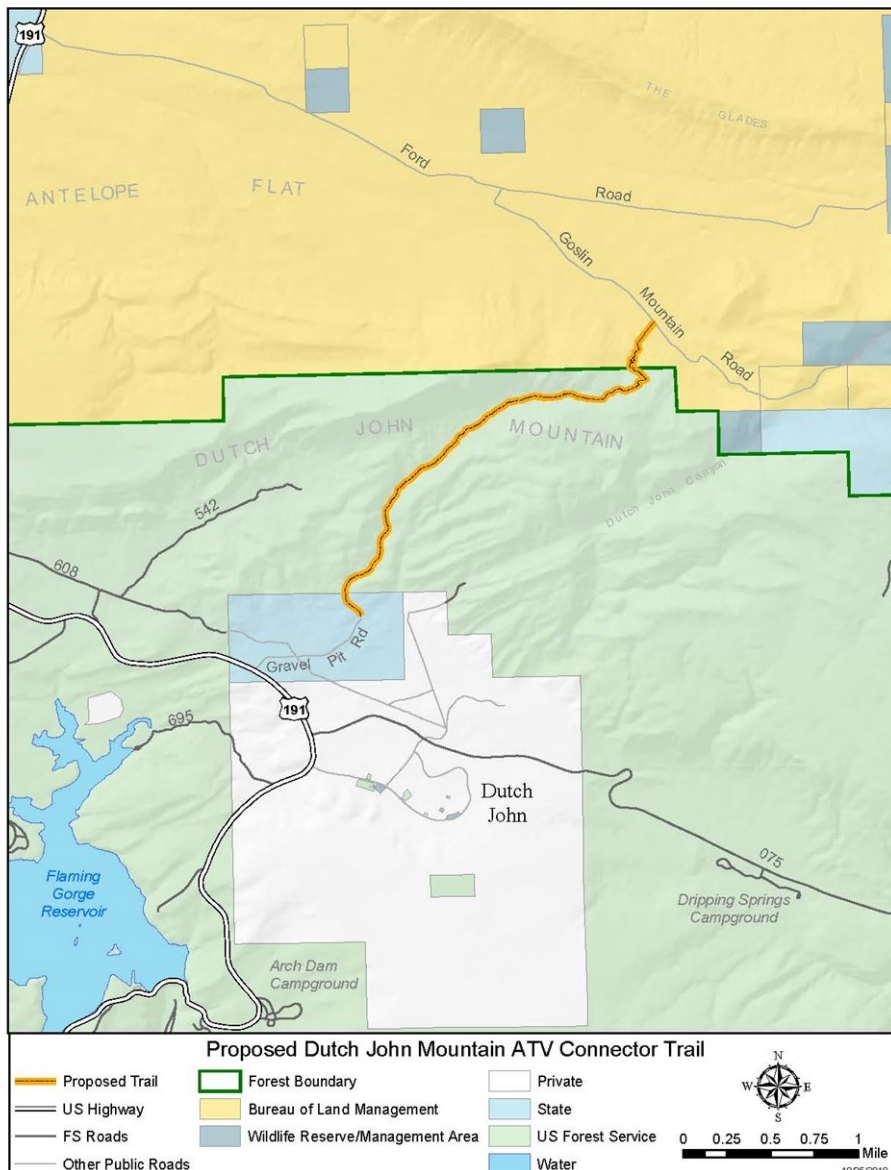
Round Park Hardened Stream Crossings Location.

# Dutch John Mountain ATV Connector Trail

The Forest Service is proposing the construction of a motorized trail in Dutch John to provide OHV users access to the existing system of BLM roads in the area of Goslin Mountain. This project would provide motorized recreationists with increased access to the public lands in and around Daggett County. Recreational opportunities exist between the community of Dutch John and the Goslin Mountain road system and this trail would connect the two areas. The proposed trail would allow OHV users to avoid Highway 191 to circumvent the canyon and improve safety for OHV riders. The location of the project is near Dutch John Canyon, and is located off the east side of Highway 191, approximately one quarter mile north of the Little Hole Road in Dutch John. The legal location of this projects is T.2N., R.22E., Northeast corner of Section 2.

**Proposal:** The project would consist of creating a trail following the remnants of an abandoned road base into Dutch John Canyon. Beyond the terminus of the old road, the trail would extend to the

border of BLM land north and east of Dutch John Mountain. Machinery and ground moving equipment would be used to construct the trail allowing for the use of motorized vehicles not larger than 60 inches in width. Trail grades would be leveled when necessary to allow for a safe experience for motorized users. There would be minimal tree removal as the area is in the location of a past burn and the majority of the Pinyon Pine and Juniper in the canyon have been burned. The estimated length of the trail would be about 2.7 miles. This project would be completed using a Categorical Exclusion under 36 CFR 220.6(e)(1) – Construction or reconstruction of trails. For more information about this project, contact Daniel De Paolis at (435) – 781 – 5240 or at [Daniel.Depaolis@usda.gov](mailto:Daniel.Depaolis@usda.gov).

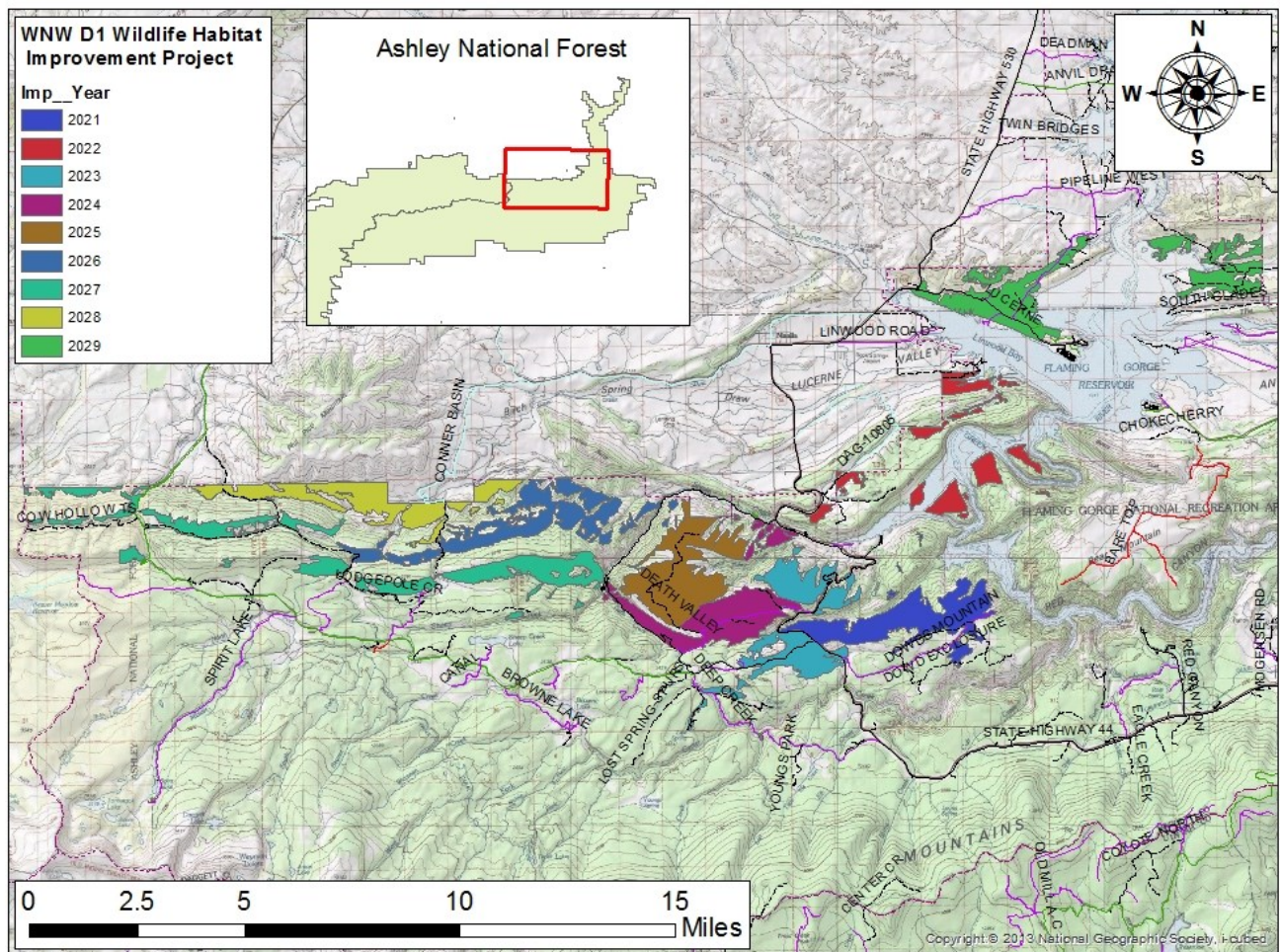


Location of the proposed connector route.



# West Northwest D1 Wildlife Habitat Improvement Project

The Ashley National Forest proposes to maintain shrub communities on the West Northwest Region of the Flaming Gorge District. The project will remove conifer species from shrub community types through hand crew lop and scatter methods on approximately 19,682 acres. The project purpose is to maintain native vegetation diversity and watershed stability, reduce wildfire impact potential, and improve/maintain wildlife habitat. The project area is located across the West Northwest Region of the Flaming Gorge District. The project spans from the western edge of the Flaming Gorge Forest Service border all the way to the eastern edge of the district border, primarily south of Manila but also including areas around Lucerne Point and directly east of Lucerne Point across the Flaming Gorge.



Project location map and stages for conifer management.

**Proposal:** Ashley National Forest vegetation in this area is largely comprised of sagebrush and mountain browse vegetation communities. This proposed management action is specifically designed to maintain and promote the condition, structure, and representative presence of these shrubland community vegetation types in the project area. The project purpose is to also promote wildlife habitat values, native vegetation understory diversity, protect watershed values, minimize negative impacts of potential wildland fire intensity, and limit subsequent potential invasive vegetative species establishment and expansion. The project would be carried out in stages from 2021 through 2029.

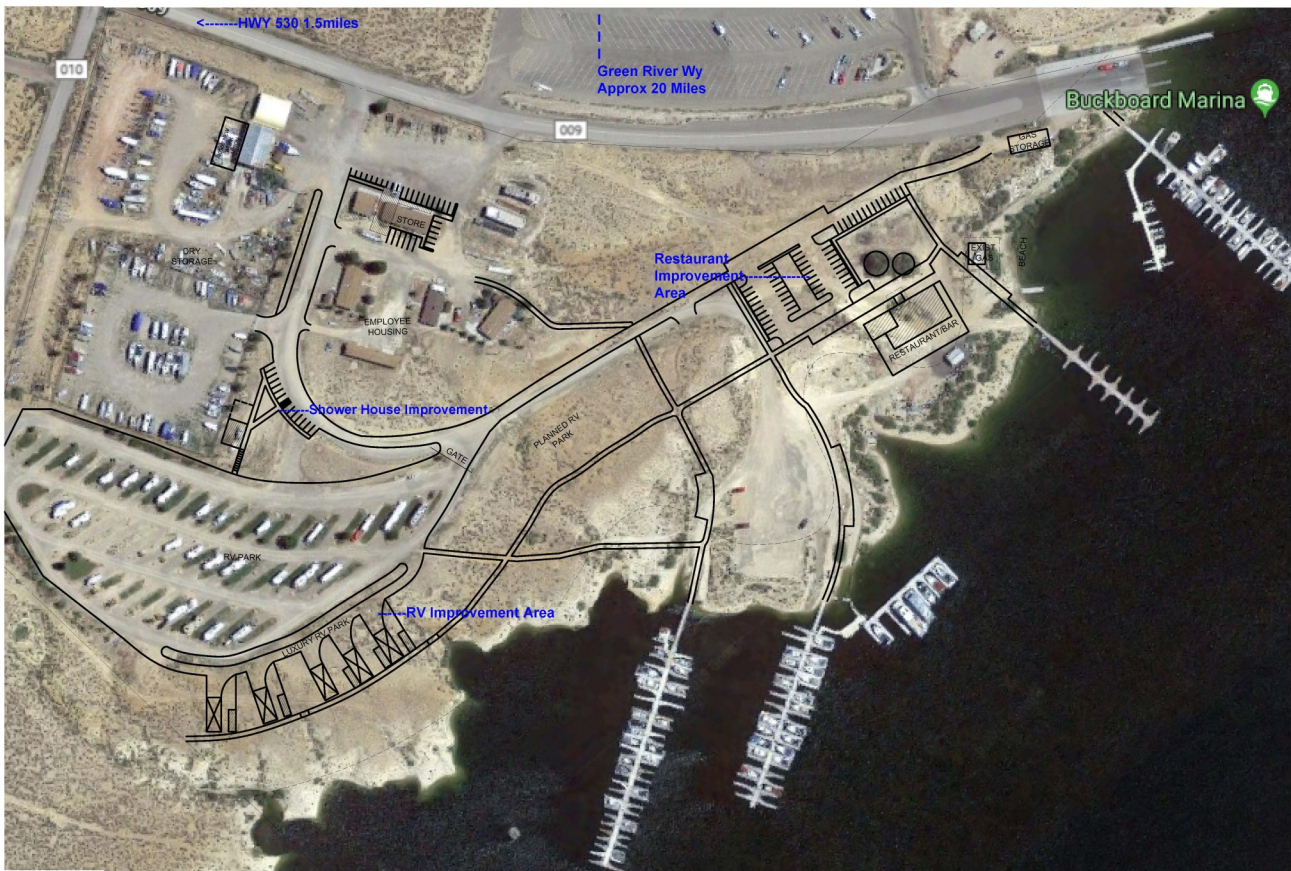
The treatment method would use ground crews and standard lop and scatter chainsaw techniques to remove conifer tree species expansion. Some selective prescribed thinning may also be applied if potential forested site inclusions exist. Part of the purpose is to also improve forest stand inclusion characteristics and/or native understory vegetation diversity. There is one particular unit classified as pinyon-juniper woodland that has been included in the project across from The Cut in the Flaming Gorge specifically for selective thinning. This site has been identified by numerous bighorn sheep lamb sightings and ewe GPS collar data to be of potential significance for birthing and lamb rearing. It is important to maintain and improve browse vegetation by pinyon-juniper thinning on a portion of this island to benefit bighorn sheep herds. The anticipated project start date would be the fall of 2021. This proposed action may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EIS or EA using the category of 36 CFR 220.6(e)(6): Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 mile of low standard road construction. For more information, the project lead is Jason Kelton, Wildlife Biologist, Flaming Gorge-Vernal Ranger District (phone 435-781-5181, email [jason.kelton1@usda.gov](mailto:jason.kelton1@usda.gov)).

## **Buckboard Marina Improvement Project**

At the end of this summer (2019), the Buckboard Marina was sold to new owners. The new owners have approached the Forest Service and requested to make improvements to the Marina by adding some additional facilities to their permit authorization. A request was received to add a restaurant building, a shower house building, and five additional RV sites. These improvements would not add additional acreage to the marina, or change the scope of the authorized activities on the marina permit, and would enhance and improve the existing marina. These requested facilities were approved under the Buckboard Marina's original master development plan and are consistent with the marina's approved use. Buckboard Marina encompasses 77 acres located on the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area in Sections 28, 29, 32, and 33 of T15N R108 W, Sweetwater County Wyoming. The marina is located approximately 26 miles south of Green River, WY and 25 miles north of Manila, UT on Highway 530.

**Proposal:** The permit holder has proposed the additional of two new facilities to include a restaurant and a shower house, as well as five additional RV sites located within their existing authorized area. The acreage of ground disturbance would be approximately 3.2 total acres. This proposed action may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EIS or EA using the category of 36 CFR 220.6(e)(3): Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land. The Forest Service would issue a special use permit authorizing the construction of these facilities, and then the improvements to the marina could begin. For more information on this project, please contact Jayson Roundy, the special use administrator in Manila, UT. He can be reached at (435) 781-5281 or by email at [jayson.roundy@usda.gov](mailto:jayson.roundy@usda.gov).





Location of improvements at Buckboard Marina.

## How to Comment

We are accepting comments on any of the projects described in the newsletter. A preliminary assessment indicates that each of these projects fall within a category of action that is excluded from NEPA documentation in an environmental Assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS). There is no administrative review for these projects. However, your comments are important to us and we welcome your input and suggestions.

If you are interested in or affected by this proposal, this is your opportunity to make your concerns known prior to the point at which we will make a decision. Comments should be specific to the project and include information we should consider in reaching a decision. Please submit comments, via email or hard copy mail, by November 23, 2019.

**Email:** [comments-intermtn-ashley@usda.gov](mailto:comments-intermtn-ashley@usda.gov) (please put the name of the project you are commenting on in the subject line).

OR

**Hard copy mail:** Flaming Gorge/Vernal District Ranger  
Ryan Buerkle  
355 N. Vernal Ave.  
Vernal, UT 84078

## Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about any of these projects.

### Highline ATV Trail Reroute

Joseph Ellsworth  
(435) 781-5179  
[joseph.ellsworth@usda.gov](mailto:joseph.ellsworth@usda.gov)

### Big Brush Creek—Outlaw ATV Trail Reroute

Joseph Ellsworth  
(435) 781-5179  
[joseph.ellsworth@usda.gov](mailto:joseph.ellsworth@usda.gov)

### Round Park Hardened Stream Crossings

Kevin Faucher  
(435) 781-5189  
[kevin.faucher@usda.gov](mailto:kevin.faucher@usda.gov)

### Dutch John Mountain ATV Connector Trail

Daniel DePaolis  
(435) 781-5240  
[daniel.depaulis@usda.gov](mailto:daniel.depaulis@usda.gov)

### West Northwest D1 Wildlife Habitat Improvement Project

Jason Kelton  
(435) 781-5181  
[jason.kelton@usda.gov](mailto:jason.kelton@usda.gov)

### Buckboard Marina Improvements

Jayson Roundy  
(435) 781-5281  
[jayson.roundy@usda.gov](mailto:jayson.roundy@usda.gov)



# U.S. FOREST SERVICE

Caring for the land and serving people

United States Department of Agriculture